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Abominable Snowman or Bigfoot: A Psychoanalytic Search for the Origin of Yeti and Sasquatch Tales

> "They are called Monkeys (simia) in the Latin languages because people notice a great similitude to human reason in them. Wise in lore of the elements, these creatures grow merry at the time of the new moon. At half and full moon they are depressed. Such is the nature of a monkey that when she gives birth to twins, she esteems one of them highly but scorns the other. Hence, if it ever happens that she gets chased by a sportsman she clasps the one she likes in her arms in front of her, and carries the one she detests with its arms round her neck, pick a back. But for this very reason, when she is exhausted by running on her hind legs, she has to throw away the one she loves, and carries the one she hates, willy-nilly [. . .]"[1].

In this paper we would like to explore the reason for the tenacity of stories and sightings concerning a mythical, awe-inspiring creature resembling man, bear, or ape, namely the sasquatch and the yeti. For that purpose we will review some rituals, beliefs, and tales dealing with apes and bears. We will try to clarify the nature of these relationships using psychoanalytic concepts. Primary process thinking, the origin of phobias and ritualization, and the inducement of visions will become explanatory themes in the understanding of the bigfoot and abominable snowman phenomenon.

The opening quotation in this paper taken from *The Bestiary* is a good illustration of man's imagination in describing real and fictitious animals. Fact and fiction intertwine in many of these tales and become indistinguishable. Notably human-like animals captured the imagination, particularly in the case of children and primitive man who are inclined to anthropomorphize animals. We can observe how the child and primitive man spend a considerable part of their time in a twilight world where the material and the spiritual, the natural and the super-natural, fantasy and reality are largely inseparable. Man and animal appear to be caught in an intricately entangled web in which originally well differentiated characteristics become fused and hazy, losing their individual delineations. These mental processes cause transformations of images; animals change in appearance, becoming objects of projective fantasies.

Two animals in particular have inspired the imagination of man because of their resemblance to human beings. Apes and bears, animals both habitually standing on their hind legs, resemble man in many ways. They may even

[1] Anonymous, The Bestiary, ©1960, 34.

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seem identical from a distance. There are also the tangible remains of their presence, that is to say, their footprints, to enforce this resemblance. Expectedly, especially in primitive societies, man has identified himself with apes and bears. The transformation of these two animals into human-like creatures to which man could attribute an extensive number of human qualities becomes understandable. Primitive man frequently gifted these animals with supernatural powers and in the process created mythical beings.

A famous mythical creature, resembling man, ape, or bear has been the abominable snowman, also called sasquatch or yeti. Reports of the existence of a large hairy humanoid roaming the hills of the Rocky Mountains or Himalayas have been persistent up to the present.

Ape and Bear Lore

A brief look at literature and art indicates how popular apes and bears have been as objects for positive and negative identification. Bear and monkey in the role of 'sinner' or 'devil' are repeatedly encountered in myth, fable, and fairy tale. Not only have numerous writers used these themes, but they can also be found in paintings and sketches. In several paintings depicting the Fall of Man, we discover the monkey as a weird, mysterious creature in the background. For example, this can be seen in the work of Jan Gossaert, Ludwig Krug, and Erhard Altdorfer. One student of early ape-lore commented on this symbolic role and said that "Studies of the ape as the image of devil or sinner, as the beast fraudulently pretending to human status, or as the product of punitive 'devolution', have touched upon the Fall of Man"[2].

The ambivalence surrounding apes and bears is striking; the opening quotation of this paper is only a mild reflection. For example, the image of the ape as raper and kidnapper is a very common theme. The film *King Kong*, depicting the kidnapping of a woman by a giant ape, is a good illustration.

China, a country where monkeys are a common sight has produced many stories in which it is hard to differentiate between man and monkey. *The White Monkey*, a story dating back to the Tang Dynasty, tells about a woman kidnapped by a white monkey, an affair which ends with the conception of a child[3]. In China, the monkey has always been a favorite animal for projecting positive and negative imagery. *Monkey*, a popular Chinese saga involving an actually occurred pilgrimage to India by the monk Hsuan Tsang, is perhaps the best example[4]. Here, the monkey is not portrayed as a devilish raper, but as an ordinary man stumbling through life. The ease with which the reader could identify with the hardships the monkey-hero had to overcome probably contributed to its popularity.

[2] Janson 1952, 107.
[3] Anonymous, The White Monkey, 1954.
[4] Wu 1968.

The remarkable degree of ambivalence associated with monkeys is also found in bear lore. Due to the wider geographical distribution of bears the amount of material on the subject has been enormous. Among the American Indians, the Finns, Lapps, and several Siberian tribes we find not only many bear tales but also bear cults. Bear rituals can even be traced back to prehistoric times. For example, in the caves of paleolithic man ritually buried bear skulls and bones have been excavated. In paleolithic art (especially in caves in the South of France), we can find many drawings of bears. It is remarkable how little distinction these early artists made between man and bear. In many of their drawings we can observe composite configurations possessing both bear- and human-like lineations. Merging human and bear features may have had a magical meaning to the paleolithic artist. He may have imagined (given the overall importance of hunting for survival), that through these drawings he would obtain control over admired bear-like characteristics, the most obvious ones being strength and courage.

In relatively more recent times, Finland became one of the areas where the role of the bear has influenced the culture. In the *Kalevala,* the great Finnish epic, the hero Väinämöinen kills a bear. Particularly interesting in this episode is the description of the various rituals which must be observed after the bear has been killed. The bear, before and during the feast in his honor of which he is the main dish is treated with the utmost respect, like an honored guest. After bringing the bear to the village Väinämöinen says:

"'What I bring is not an otter,
Not a lynx, and not an otter,
One more famous is approaching
Comes the pride of all the forest.
Comes an old man wandering hither,
With his overcoat he cometh
If it be a pleasure to you,
Let the doors be widely opened;
But if you dislike the stranger
Close the doors against him firmly'.
And the people gave him answer,
Shouted all the handsome people,
'Welcome, Otso, be thy coming,
Honey-pawed, who now approachest
To our dwelling, freshly scoured,
To our household, now so charming.
This I wished for all my lifetime [...]'"[5].

The women are asked to leave since the bear is coming:

"Girls, depart ye from the door-posts,
To the house there comes the hero,
And the pride of men approaches
Otso, apple of the forest,
Fair and bulky forest dweller [...]"[6].

[5] Anonymous, Kalevala, 1951, t. 2, 216 sq.
[6] Anonymous, Kalevala, 1951, t. 2, 218.

It is interesting to read that Väinämöinen denies that he has killed the bear:

> "With the spear I smote not Otso,
> and I shot no arrows at him.
> He himself lurched from the archway,
> Tumbled from the pine-tree's summit,
> And the branches broke his breast bone,
> Others ripped his belly open [. . .]"[7].

The themes of treating the bear as an honored guest, sending the women away, while pretending that the bear has been killed by accident or by someone else, and ending in the burial of the bones of the bear, has been a common tradition among the Lapps, Siberian, and American Indian tribes. The Ojibwa Indians used to accuse the Englishmen of having killed the bear, while many Siberian tribes made apologies to the slain bear and accused the Russians of this evil deed[8]. Among many tribes the pretence was used that the bear had not been attacked directly, but had run 'by accident' into the 'suddenly' raised spear of the hunter. A prohibition existed against killing a bear when it was asleep in its den since it was believed that it would provoke bears to retaliate: the hunter might be attacked the same way.

We can also find elaborate bear rites among the Kwakiutl Indians on the North Pacific Coast area and the Algonkians. Among the Kwakiutl Indians the slain bear participated in a ceremonial meal, a necessary prelude to its being eaten. The Northern Algonkians used to give the dead bear tobacco. The ancient Micmac made a special entrance in the wigwam for the carcass of the bear, the explanation being that women did not deserve to come through the same entrance. Childless women and girls were not allowed in the wigwam when the bear was being eaten[9].

Perhaps the most interesting bear customs exist among the Gilyaks, Ostyaks, and Ainus in Siberia and Northern Japan. With regard to the Ostyaks A. I. Hallowell makes the following remarks:

> "No human being is ever killed by a bear unless he has committed some 'sin' and the bears which are slain by men are, in turn, those which have disobeyed the injunctions of Numi-torum[10]. Both men and bears in relation to each other, thus become instruments of supernatural justice. Furthermore, Numi-torum has also prescribed that bears should be esteemed both in life and in death and should any human being be disrespectful to one of these creatures he will be punished by meeting his death in combat with a bear. These ideas thus bring about a sort of duality in the feeling which the natives hold toward the beast. Any one who feels guilty of any kind of wrongdoing trembles at the sight of the bear, but when the animal is hunted, there is a hidden hope that Numi-torum will send the hunter a bear who has 'sinned' [. . .]"[11].

[7] Amonymous, Kalevala, 1951, t. 2, 224.
[8] See Hallowell 1926, 57 sq.
[9] Hallowell 1926, 68.
[10] The sky god.
[11] Hallowell 1926, 90.

To the Gilyaks the bear is a messenger from another world, the world of the spirits. The deceased members of the clan and the spiritual 'masters' of the bear are close relatives. Bears and members of the clan are therefore considered members of one family. The clan regularly celebrates a bear festival during which captured, raised bears are ceremonially killed. Before the actual killing takes place many good wishes and messages are given to the bear to be delivered to their common spiritual ancestors. The desire for good hunting and fishing is the customary wish for the coming year. Usually, the sons-in-law of the host will kill the bear. Afterwards, the host and the members of his sib are only entitled to the broth of the bear meat while the sons-in-law are the claimants of the meat[12].

Most of these ancestor relationships are often maintained by a story of origin. We can find this belief in the creation story among the Ainus in Northern Japan who trace their origin back to bears: "The ancient forefather of man begot a son from a female bear, and after his birth, he was brought by the bear in the neighborhood of the place where his father lived so that he accepted him"[13]. A bear festival quite similar to that of the Gilyaks and Ostyaks can also be found among the Ainus. Raised bear cubs are regularly ceremonially killed and lamented.

In many folk tales from various geographical areas we can find bear themes. In *Die Mos-Frau*, a story originating from Siberia, a bear is depicted as giving birth to a maiden[14]. In *Der Bären-Sohn* (the bear son), a woman is kidnapped by a bear and gives birth to a child which has the features of both bear and man[15]. Turi, in *Das Buch der Lappen*, narrates a story circulating among the Lapps which tells about a girl who stayed in the den of a bear during the long winter and conceived a child. In this case the child was also half bear and half man[16]. In an Indian tale from the Northern Rocky Mountains a Nez Percé boy got lost in the mountains and was adopted by a grizzly bear[17]. In an Iroquois tale an orphaned boy was looked after by a bear[18].

We can find among these various bear stories and rituals, as in ape lore, several common oscillating themes. The killing of a bear necessitates not only an apology, but also a denial of having been part of that 'unfortunate' incident. Although the bear is frequently portrayed as a kidnapper and rapist of women, it seems that these women are not only attracted but also willing to cooperate and engage in sexual activities with the kidnapper. On the one hand bears take care of lost and orphaned children, on the other hand there is always the danger of being killed and eaten by these 'cannibalistic' creatures. There are many taboos concerning the proper way of treating the slain

[12] Hallowell 1926, 106—119.
[13] Findeisen 1956, 20 (own translation).
[14] Gulya 1968, 26—36.
[15] Gulya 1968, 260—265.
[16] Turi 1912, 120.
[17] Clark 1966, 44.
[18] Jenness 1956, 4 sqq.

bear. Sometimes women are not allowed to look directly at a bear, and if so, only after they have taken elaborate precautions (i. e. among the Ostyaks the women are required to put a handkerchief over their head). Regularly women are forbidden to eat certain parts of a bear. Many tribes believe that the bones, the fur, the paws, and the head of the bear possess magical qualities[19].

Since the bear is often regarded as the forefather of the tribe, after it has been killed it is treated with the highest honors accorded to a 'close relative'. The many names by which bears are known illustrate this supposed family relationship. For example, the Algonkians call the bear cousin, grandfather, short tail, black beast, or the angry one; the Ojibwa name him relative; the Sauk call him old man, and the Blackfoot the big hairy one. In Siberia the Yukaghir speak of grandfather or old man. The Ural-Altaic people (Lapps, Ostyaks, etc.) talk about the grandfather, good father, old man, and furry father[20]. In China and Tibet the bear is called strong man or wild hairy mountain man[21]. The names given to bears in these various cultures show a remarkable similarity.

A mysterious humanoid giant

The sasquatch is a creature which supposedly dwells in the Rocky Mountains while the yeti is assumed to live high up in the Himalayas. Another name for the sasquatch is bigfoot; the yeti is better known under the name abominable snowman[22]. Apart from their supposed existence in the Rocky Mountains and Himalayas, many sightings of these creatures have been reported all over the world from South America to Siberia. I. T. Sanderson in his book on the abominable snowman even distinguishes between four types of these beings. But, whatever the type, these creatures supposedly closely resemble the gigantopithecus, a large early relative of man. This humanoid which lived during the Pliocene period was assumed to be nine feet tall and weighed as much as six hundred pounds[23]. However, although many sightings have been reported of the sasquatch and yeti, the only 'tangible' remains to date have been the footprints.

The names given to sasquatch and yeti remind us (not accidentally as further analysis will show) of the various aliases under which bears and apes are known. The name sasquatch is derived from the Salish American Indians and means 'wildman of the woods'[24]. Another name for the sasquatch has been Oh-Mah, a word which has the connotation of devil[25]. The names given to the yeti are numerous and can be translated as glacier spirit, man-bear, man-ape, strong man, large man, and demonic warlock[26].

[19] Hallowell 1926, 116.
[20] Hallowell 1926, 43—53.
[21] Biedermann 1966, 149.
[22] For literature on this subject see especially Sanderson 1961 and Green ²1968.
[23] See Simons/Ettel 1970.
[24] See Sanderson 1961, 46.
[25] Sanderson 1961, 120.
[26] Biedermann 1966, 141 sq.

The sasquatch and yeti, mythical hairy human-like beings living on mountain slopes and in mountain forests, singularly struck the imagination of man. This belief in terrifying hairy creatures appearing especially at night has been prevalent all over the world and is reflected in many folk tales. For example, to the Cœur d'Alêne Indians the existence of strange creatures has always been very real. They believed in giants with black faces, often dressed in bear skins who lived in caves. Occasionally these giants would steal women[27].

The belief in terrifying hairy creatures has been prevalent among Indian and Eskimo tribes in North America. P. Berton gives a graphic description of the many weird creatures which are supposed to dwell high in the far North:

> "The Mahoni who flit through the Peel River country in Northern Yukon, are enormous hairy giants with red eyes, who eat human flesh and devour entire birch trees at a gulp. The predatory sasquatches of British Columbia's mountain caves are eight feet tall and covered with black woolly hair from head to foot. There are others, all kin to these: the terrible Brush Man of the Loucheaux in the upper Mackenzie with his black face and yellow eyes, preying on women and children; the Weetigo of the Barrens, that horrible, naked cannibal, his face black with frostbite, his lips eaten away to expose his fang-like teeth; the eight-foot head-hunting 'Mountain Men' of the Nahanni; and those imaginary beings of Great Slave Lake whom the Dogrib Indians simply call 'the Enemy' and fear so greatly that they must always build their homes on islands safe from the shore line where the Enemy roams [...]"[28].

It may be noteworthy, considering the imagined existence of the weetigo, that the Ojibwas used to send their young sons (being not more than seven years old) to the woods to fast, after having blackened their faces[29]. Both E. E. Clark and Berton refer to black faces in their recorded Indian stories.

Similar beliefs can be found in the Himalayan region. A Tibetan account of creation taken from a manuscript of the 13th century contains the following sentences: "The mighty royal mountain palace is occupied by the various spirits. The top of the mighty royal mountain is occupied by man. The inner caves of the mighty royal mountain are occupied by the Tibetans. The part under the mighty royal mountains is occupied by the cave men, hunger spirits and animals"[30]. These stories certainly set the stage for the belief in humanoid creatures.

Accounts of cannibalistic giants can be found in any culture, horror movies and science fiction stories being more contemporary reflections of these beliefs. The notion of the existence of frightening, mysterious creatures, however, has been much more alive among primitive man. Comparable to the very private world of the child, man in primitive cultures more easily ignored boundaries between fantasy and reality and endowed animals and even inanimate objects with magical powers.

[27] Clark 1966, 114.
[28] Berton 1956, 10 sq.
[29] Lowie 1956, 14.
[30] Hermanns 1946—49, 277 (own translation).

The role of primary process thinking

When the outside world poses a threat, animals, if endowed with special powers, may be used as a form of protection in dealing with these perceived threats; at the same time they may also symbolize these very dangers. And in the fantasy life of the child and primitive man these powers can be used both in a positive and in a negative sense. The creative powers of man in this magical thinking process are endless. Animals become like mirrors on which man can reflect his inner fears and wishes. If no animal is available to symbolize protective or threatening imagery, nothing restrains man from creating totally new, imaginary beings aided by primary process thinking as we can observe in dreams.

The dream is the best known form of primary process thinking because it appears as a highly unorganized collection of memory traces, thoughts, and perceptions[31]. A sphinx, a unicorn, a satyr, a windigo, and an abominable snowman for that matter can appear in the dream in an extremely vivid way. The emergence of these creatures indicates the operation of condensation and distortion as part of the dream process. A child who has been frightened by a bear or ape the previous day might perceive these animals with negative affect. This perception, combined with ambivalent feelings (for example toward his father), might result in a transformation and integration of these two images in the dream. As a result a creature might emerge which is half man and half bear or ape.

We can take the dream process as the model for the origin of the belief in giants and cannibalistic hairy monsters. Since everybody dreams and everybody will have some contact with animals it might explain why the occurrence of tales about large humanoid creatures has been so universal. Man will attempt to combine various memory traces and perceptions into an organized whole. Myths emerge through an interplay of traces of fantasy and reality to make sense out of an ever threatening outside world.

Natural phenomena are perceived in a totally different way by a child and primitive man than is the case among adult 'modern' man. Man searches for meaning, and, in the absence of a science like metereology explaining natural phenomena, a mythological world is created, inhabited by an extensive number of creatures whose existence would explain otherwise unexplainable incidents. Imposing scenery, nature calamities, and weather changes inspire the imagination. In this mythological world the caves in the mountains and the forests become places where strange creatures roam.

We can find in the existing literature on yeti and sasquatch a considerable number of statements by people — and many even very recent — who are convinced that they have seen these creatures. Apart from the possibility that these encounters could have been real, it is more likely that these observations can be listed among the delusionary, illusionary and hallucinatory experiences

[31] Freud, Traumdeutung, ³1961.

induced by sensory deprivation. Unlike an illusion, in the case of hallucinations and delusions an appropriate external sense stimulus is absent. O. Fenichel sees delusions as:

> "misjudgements of reality based on projection. While the elements of hallucinations are limited to perceptual sensations, delusions are built up of more complicated and sometimes systematized ideas. Like hallucinations, they sometimes are of a wishfulfillment type, but more often they are painful and frightening. Representing an attempt to supplant the lost parts of reality, which returns nevertheless, and portions of warded-off drives as well as projected demands of the superego [...]"[32].

In hallucinations and delusions projection of ideas and wishes is important. Inner conflicts become crystalized and are perceived as real. There is also an intimate resemblance to the dream process: like in the dream, there is an absence of reality testing. There is, however, a slight difference, since in delusions an attempt at reality testing is being made. Delusions may therefore appear more organized whereas in hallucinations the person hears, smells, and sees 'things' which are not there, but are mere projections of internal wishes. With delusions, an actual sensatory experience is not necessary, although ideas are distorted and lose touch with reality.

Common causes of spontaneous hallucination are accidents and operations. Total sensory deprivation such as lack of water and food as well as social deprivation such as isolation can have the same effects. A review of the stories by shipwrecked persons deprived of water, food, and companions is illustrative. Among some Indian tribes intoxicants like peyote are used to induce this process.

The role of phobias

We can observe how the anxiety which the child experiences (for example as a consequence of feelings of aggression directed toward the father perceived as all-powerful and all-knowing during the Oedipal phase) can be displaced, i. e. redirected toward animals, a process facilitated through primary process thinking[33]. The inducement of hallucinations and delusional experiences through sensory deprivation play a role in this process. Frequently the animal becomes a symbol representing the father. Fenichel comments about phobias that:

> "A child can easily imagine human beings in the form of animals, and the animals feared in the phobias are as a rule distorted representations of human beings usually the father. The representation of the father as an animal signifies

[32] Fenichel 1945, 427.

[33] The operation of displacement in anxiety hysteria has been reported by Freud in his Analyse der Phobie eines fünfjährigen Knaben. In that case a horse phobia was described, a symptom in which projective and displacement mechanisms were active. After analysis, this proved to be anxiety caused by fear of the father which could be interpreted as a reflection of the Boy's own hostile wishes (see Freud [4]1966). In the analysis of the 'Wolfman', the fear of being eaten by a wolf (being incorporated) was one of the important aspects which evolved from the analysis (see Freud, Aus der Geschichte einer infantilen Neurose, [3]1966). See also Freud, Totem und Tabu, [3]1961.

the sexually excited father. It expresses the perception of the father as animal like, that is, as the passionate, sexual, or aggressive being [...]"[34].

Besides these more idiosyncratic phobias such as being afraid of specific animals, we can also find more general phobias. Fear of the dark and of thunder and lightning are good examples which might be related to an even earlier stage in life in which the fear of separation from the mother was extremely anxiety-provoking.

The logic of the emergence of a phobia is simple. Instead of being threatened by an internal danger (which unconsciously is mostly centered around fear of separation and anxiety about forbidden wishes, the original one being the complete possession of the mother), the emerging hostility is denied, split off, and projected onto another subject or object. Since the child has to live with the outlet for aggression (usually the father) projective processes cause fear of retaliation: if I am hostile to him, he will be hostile to me. Therefore, the child finds a more practical solution and projects this anxiety onto a different object. An animal or an animal-like creature such as bear, ape, or sasquatch is a popular choice. It is also an attractive solution to the child since it simplifies his perception of the world now divided into 'good' and 'bad' objects. The ability to fuse feelings of love and hate presupposes a long period of development and maturation in addition to the ability to cope with one's inner conflicts. The child and primitive man are here very much alike; they are inclined to have a dichotomic view of the world. That way they can love the father with less conflict and without the persistent pressure of forbidden wishes and fear of retaliation since feelings of hate and anxiety are split off and put onto a 'bad' object represented by an animal or situation. Why a specific object or situation is chosen depends mainly on the individual and the environment.

In a closed society in which nearly no outside influences exist and where the patterns of child rearing practices are relatively stable, the distinction between a general phobia and an idiosyncratic phobia becomes vague and even disappears. What originally started as an individual phobia might become institutionalized and becomes important to a whole tribe or culture[35].

The origin of the beliefs in strange, threatening creatures and also the meaning of some of the taboos mentioned earlier in this paper becomes now less of a puzzle. Ape and bear customs and beliefs are very similar to the

[34] Fenichel 1945, 213.

[35] For example, the belief and fear of werewolves, incredulous as it may appear nowadays, was a grim reality a few centuries ago. The notion that some individuals were capable of transforming into wolves contributed to many executions. Moreover, the accused werewolves often had the delusion that they really possessed this uncanny capacity. Strong incorporative and projective characteristics can be found in this belief; in addition it satisfies oral cannibalistic fantasies. And indeed supposed werewolves sometimes indulged in cannibalistic practices. But even in those days it was often realized that these supposed werewolves were actually mentally disturbed. For more information on the belief in werewolves see Hamel 1915, 54—77.

feelings of children toward their parents. Although in most cases we need a deeper level of analysis to find an association between bear, ape, and parental image, in several cases (particularly among the Ainus and Gilyaks), the bear is actually viewed as the great-grandfather, the founder of the tribe. The names given to bears and apes are indicative. Comparable to the neurotic in modern society who creates his own rituals and taboos, primitive man seems to institutionalize his animal phobias. The animals, particularly the bear and the ape, become symbol and substitute for the parental figures. They become favorite outlets for the projection of feelings of love and hate, particularly since it allows for the actualization of feared, forbidden fantasies through the mechanism of splitting and displacement. And the original, threatening meaning of these fantasies will disappear in the process.

The need for rituals

Institutionalized and idiosyncratic phobias require rituals. Illustrative is the importance of the killing and the subsequent incorporation (eating) of the animal. It is a magical act. The person is afraid of being eaten, therefore, in an attempt at mastery, he eats the feared object himself. The tribesman kills a bear (which might be viewed as an enactment of the oedipal fantasy), but out of fear for the lex talionis, he denies that he has killed the animal. Subsequently, in an attempt at reconciliation and a sense of guilt, the dead bear is held in the highest regard and treated as an ancestor of the tribe. And a human being it is, if we consider the absence of definite boundaries between reality and fantasy. We also recall the imagery of danger (particularly to women) surrounding bears, and apes. Naturally, bear and ape as a father image are perceived as dangerous to women; the incest taboo reflects a desire which necessitates a strong prohibition. Since in the thought processes of the child and primitive man, the animal as the disguised father has been the original possessor of the women, now anxiety will arise that he might take back that what rightfully belongs to him. The possibility of reprisal only exacerbates this anxiety. We recall that among the Gilyaks the sons-in-law are designated to be the killers of the bear, the symbolic father image. This might be explained as an indication of the fear that the father is unwilling to give up the possession of his daughters.

The role of bear and ape, or animals in general, as rapers and kidnappers becomes understandable. The child wants to possess the mother or mother representation, but she is being stolen by that awe-inspiring aggressive monster representing the father. Primitive man imitates the animal and is afraid of the animal; he kills the animal, but also regrets and denies the killing and out of a sense of guilt then tries to arrive at some form of restitution. He is afraid of monsters with dark faces, therefore as an attempt at mastery he paints his face black. He fears that the women will run away with animals or animal-like creatures, so he takes precautions to prevent this from happening. An example is the prohibition to women of looking at the animal, because of

the fear for its magical (sexual) powers. This might be based on the unconscious fantasy that the women will recognize the animal as their original love object, the father, a thought which would reactivate rivalry and separation. That danger is most apparent in the case of girls and childless women. Rituals are therefore created for protection. An excellent example is the custom whereby the animal is not allowed to be brought in through the normal entrance of the living place. Doing so would be a dangerous invitation. The spirit of the animal and its spiritual ancestors might find their way back and might do the same to the killers as has been done to them.

The nostalgia for an earlier happier stage in life is a very persistent fantasy in these tales. The stories of the children lost in the mountains or orphaned and being taken care of by bears can now be seen in a different light. We might view these beliefs as a portrayal of the danger of separation, of feelings of helplessness, and a search for paradise lost. Bears apparently not only play an aggressive paternal role but can also play a maternal role. To be looked after in a cave by a woolly motherly figure is an attractive fantasy to the child and primitive man. Sasquatch and yeti stories contain similar themes.

There is a strong oral, incorporative element in many of these tales. An example is the popular belief that bears suck their paws as a way of obtaining food during the long winter. In the *Kalevala* we find a reference to the bear (among other names) as honey paw. In the mythological world of the Ojibwa Indians, windigo, cannibalistic monsters dwell in the woods. The Ojibwas believe that a person can transform himself into a windigo making it possible for him to devour even his own relatives. That this notion still lives on is illustrated in a case of fairly recent murder among the Ojibwas. To the murderer his act was inevitable since the victim supposedly had been transformed into a windigo[36].

The inducement of visions

The sightings of the sasquatch and yeti in areas where bears and apes are fairly common may become now more understandable. Support for our interpretations can also be found in a number of American Indian and Tibetan rites of passage. For example, it was a custom among many Indian tribes to search for a guardian spirit as soon as adolescence was reached. This guardian spirit would serve as a guide in life. Clark mentions that the Kalispel-Flathead Indians used to climb a mountain and build a circular wall of rocks around themselves, waiting for the guardian spirit to come[37]. We can imagine the stress experienced by these adolescents. Sensory deprivation through fasting and thirsting, and absolute loneliness combined with an institutionalized way of accepting visions as normal and inevitable naturally facilitated hallucinatory, illusionary and delusionary experiences. Imagine also how the Ojibwa

[36] Casagrande 1956, 39 sq.
[37] Clark 1966, 118 sq.

Indian child must have felt being sent into the woods without water and food. E. H. Erikson talks about this experience in his study of the Sioux Indians:

> "The adolescent Sioux would go out and seek dreams, or rather visions, while there was still time to decide on a life plan. Unarmed, and naked, except for loincloth and moccasins, he would go out into the prairie, exposing himself to sun, danger, and hunger, and tell the deity of his essential humility and need for guidance [...]"[38].

Under these exhausting conditions and encouraged by a culture where visions are expected, hallucinations, illusions and delusions are inevitable. Bears, which used to be and still are quite common in the Rocky Mountains, easily transformed into hairy giants through primary process thinking. M. Barbeau's narration of how a Northern Rocky Mountain Indian arrived at a vision is a good illustration:

> "At fifteen years of age I was up in the hills undergoing training, all alone, all alone.
>
> One summer night I slept in an open field, in the grass near a patch of fireweeds. A great wind rose at dawn and I heard a voice, a sweet voice, floating above, floating back and forth with the tufts of cotton from the fireweed stalks [...].
>
> I woke and sat up. Oh, the strong wind, the wind that blew up the mountain slope! The grass, the fireweeds, the trees, the canyons were all singing together a mighty song [...].
>
> Then what did I see? Two women, two young women, sisters, coming from the east. They were not walking; their feet only swept the weeds as they drifted in the wind. They sang the song of nature as they came, picking flowers, grass and leaves all the way [...].
>
> Then they shook me, saying, 'Wake up, friend! The day has dawned; listen to the warbling of the birds!' When I looked up, they had turned back with the wind; they were drifting away like two white clouds above the long prairie that stretched upwards in the direction of sunrise [...]. 'Brother', they said, turning to me, 'our enemies cannot pursue us. They have lost our tracks. They who shot and wounded us cannot do any harm, for we sing the song of all nature'. Before disappearing they threw their song into the mouth of Salalaw, the diver, who repeated it while they changed into female black bears. Then I knew who they were — the female twin bears, my own snam guardian spirits [...]"[39].

Another story which again stresses the importance of the dream process is that of the creation of a shaman:

> "On a very dark night Unavnuk an Eskimo woman, was outside her hut when [...] a glowing ball of fire came rushing toward her from the sky. Before she could flee, it had struck her. At that instant everything within her body became light and she fell unconscious. Previously she had never concerned herself with occult matters, but due to the spirit of the meteor she soon became a great shaman. She had noticed before swooning that it was bear-like on one side, human on the other, and the human head bore tusks [...]"[40].

[38] Erikson ²1963, 150.
[39] Barbeau 1923, 181—184.
[40] Lowie 1956, 11.

In an environment where visions are part of the cultural legacy, individuals will resort more easily to visions in periods of great stress and exhaustion. These visions become projections of inner conflicts. Suddenly big hairy creatures transform from dream figures into reality. Since these visions were main subjects for discussion and interpretation among the members of many tribes, suggestion added to the process. If several members of a tribe had seen these sasquatches, windigo or other strange creatures, some memory traces would be retained by others and the vision could more easily be re-experienced.

A fairly similar situation exists in the Himalayan region. In an area where shamans, hermits, bears, and monkeys are a part of life, delusions, illusions and hallucinations become familiar experiences. Since shamans, hermits, and disciples subjected themselves to long periods of fasting, this experience deepened by deprivation of sleep and food, combined with total solitude, created an ideal situation for delusions, illusions and hallucinations. Moreover, the presence of many hermits in caves in the mountains who often lived in total seclusion — sometimes for life — struck the imagination of the wandering nomads and farmers. Added to the impact of these impressions was the notion that if a shaman is able to heal, he can also make people sick. The shaman became viewed with a high degree of ambivalence. He was not only considered as a healer, but also as a sorcerer and warlock. Given these ambivalent feelings, the shaman became an ideal outlet for primary process thinking and easily transformed into a supernatural being.

These notions are illustrated in the terrifying tests which the disciples of the shamans had to pass in Tibet. F. Sierksma gives a description of these trials:

> "After the disciple had been seriously warned that illness, madness or death might ensue, he was subjected to severe tests. For instance, he was sent towards evening to the loneliest wilderness, haunted by a spirit or a ghost, the home of beasts of prey. However terrified he might feel, he had to remain where he was. A pupil who too easily became accustomed to these tests, was unsuitable. Only if fear was heightened to the ultimate degree could success be expected [...]. When his moment came, the pupil would meet Terrifying Ones and demons [...]"[41].

The belief in a large number of terrifying gods which would be encountered under conditions of severe deprivation, and the existence of numerous, isolated hermits and shamans living in caves in the mountains and the forests created an extremely favorable climate for delusions, illusions and hallucinations. The funeral customs of the Tibetans in which the dead bodies are cut to pieces and spread on mountain tops or in the forests to attract the scavenger animals such as wolves, bears, and vultures, and which result in a considerable amount of human bones and skulls spread over a wide area, must have added to this state of suggestibility.

Through these primary processes, traces of all these beliefs and observed realities would become integrated. And analogous to the description of the

[41] Sierksma 1966, 146.

American Indians searching for a guardian spirit, inner fantasies and conflicts would be projected onto objects through hallucinatory and delusionary processes in which deities, animals, and man became merged.

Conclusion

In the foregoing analysis we have suggested that the sightings of sasquatch and yeti are most likely of a delusionary, illusionary and hallucinatory nature and, as such, the projections of conflicting images of people living in isolated environments under conditions of severe stress. The actual presence of bears and apes probably played a major role in the creation of these creatures considering the process of condensation and distortion operating in dreams, delusions, and hallucinations. Many rituals and tales dealing with apes and bears support this contention. We have emphasized the great similarities in mental processes among children and primitive man and have used this to explain these institutionalized animal-like phobias. We do, however, also realize that many of the more recent sightings of these creatures (especially in the case of sasquatch), have been made by 'modern' man. We suggest, that in these instances, conditions of severe stress mobilized defenses and subsequently more primitive psychological processes became operational. Sometimes the behavior of primitive and modern man seems to be not far apart.

One aspect of the yeti and sasquatch that remains difficult to explain, is the extraordinarily large number of sighted footprints. The geographical distribution of the tracks and the difficulty in making these tracks cannot easily be ignored. Apart from a real hoax, one hypothesis about this phenomenon could be that some individuals, in an attempt to master their fears of such strange creatures, are engaged in a total identification process. Imitation and impersonation becomes a consequence. It may explain the presence of these gigantic footprints[42].

As far as the factual existence of the sasquatch is concerned, droppings and hairs have proved to belong to bears. Similar findings were made about the yeti. The remains of the yeti brought back by several expeditions have been verified as being parts of the serow (a goat-like animal with a golden fleece), the sloth bear, blue Himalaya bear, and snow leopard[43]. Considering these factors and looking back at the previous analysis of animal phobias, rituals, and primary process thinking it appears justifiable to explain the existence of these persistent stories (or at least a great many of them) through the operation

[42] An analogy can be found with Human Leopard Society in Africa. The victims of the members of this society — often close relatives — were strangled and afterwards mutilated in a complicated way. The murderers possessed knives which were designed in such a way that they sprung from their hands if opened like the claws of a leopard. Its effect resembled the way a victim looked after an attack by a real leopard. To make the identification and imitation-process complete, a stick ending in a leopard-like footprint was used. As in the case of the werewolves and perhaps the windigo, cannibalism was not unusual. See Hallett ²1968, 78—81.

[43] See Burns 1962, 81—88 and Le Scour 1961, 43—46.

of these particular mental processes. Realizing the universality of these phenomena — and we are here referring to the rules which govern the unconscious also for modern man — these tales continue to speak to our imagination.

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